Unit 6 Quiz: The Mexican Revolution
Guide to Responding

This guide is intended to help you evaluate your performance on the “Unit 6 Quiz.” It lists the most important terms and concepts that should appear in your answers.

Instructions: For each question, check whether the information listed below is included in your answer. If you find that some of your answers do not have the key concepts and terms listed here, go back to the relevant subunits (listed with each question) and review the information by either re-reading the materials or listening to the lectures one more time.

If your answers include terms and ideas that do not appear here and you are not sure whether they correctly answer the questions, use the sub-unit cross-references below to go back to the relevant course materials and check that your additional information is correct.

1. In his course “Latin America: State and Nation since Independence,”
Professor Steven Volk proposes that the Mexican Revolution had four phases and five themes. What were they? Discuss each briefly.

Professor Volk proposes the following phases of the Mexican Revolution:
• 1910-1920: The armed phase of the revolution. This is when various revolutionary groups fought for power, and different political formations quickly succeeded one another.
• 1920-1940: The phase of constructing a new state, during which there was a competition between capitalist and socialist models of Mexico.
• 1940-1968: The period when Mexico was a capitalist state, and the power of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was strongly established.
• 1968-2000: The period when the power of the PRI was challenged.

He argues that the Revolution had many aspects, and proposes five types of revolutionary change that radically transformed Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century:
• The bourgeois revolution – which was political, centralizing, and modernizing.
• The peasant revolution – which was rural, involved large numbers of people, and sought democratic change.
• The workers’ revolution – which was carried out by the growing industrial proletariat.
• The revolution in Mexico’s foreign relations – especially the relatively extensive liberation of Mexico from US influence.
• The revolution in the realm of culture – which brought about new national consciousness and expressions of national identity.
Reference: Sub-subunit 6.3.1

2. Who was Francisco Madero? What role did he play in the Mexican Revolution?

• Madero was born in 1873 and came from a wealthy aristocratic family.
• He studied in the US, and traveled extensively throughout Europe.
• In April 1910, he put forward his candidacy for the presidency to challenge Porfirio Diaz in the presidential election. He was supported by a broad coalition of activists who opposed Diaz.
• Madero’s electoral campaign was interrupted, he was arrested, and Diaz won the election.
• On October 7, 1910, Madero fled to the U.S. but he instructed his associates to write the “Plan of San Luis Potosí.”
• In this document, the presidential election was proclaimed null, Madero was made provisional president, and November 20th was designated as the beginning of the revolution.
• After several months of revolutionary struggle, by May of 1911 Madero signed the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez with Diaz, who agreed to step down from the presidency.
• On November 6, 1911, Madero won the presidential election.
• He was murdered on February 22, 1913, after Huerta took power in a coup d’etat.

Reference: Sub-units 6.3.2 and 6.4.1

3. What were the most important preconditions of the Mexican Revolution?

• The legacy of European colonization in Central and South America.
• South American independence movements and the various programs of economic and political modernization that they ushered in.
• Population growth and impoverishment of peasants and workers,
• Immense wealth disparities between the small landowning class (5% of the population) and the majority of workers and peasants,
• Fast economic modernization under the Porfiriato, achieved by a brutal dictatorship that disregarded human rights.
• Corruption and electoral abuses of the Diaz regime.
• A tradition of liberal thought which developed in Mexico in the nineteenth century.

Reference: Subunits 6.1 and 6.2

4. What arguments did Emiliano Zapata make in his 1911 “Plan of Ayala”?
• The “Plan of Ayala” promised to fulfill the promises of the revolution which started on November 20, 1910 (the date proposed by Madero) – i.e. it was a critique of Madero and of what the revolution achieved since its start.
• The document accused Madero of being a traitor, making empty promises, and of usurping power while excluding those who shed blood during the revolution.
• Madero was accused of being a tyrant who dismissed the needs of the majority of the population (the peasants) and sided with the wealthy, the “Plan of Ayala” therefore called for his overthrow.
• General Orozco was to replace Madero as the leader of the revolution, and if he should decline, then the leadership should go to Zapata.
• The document called for the peasants and the revolutionaries to seize the property that the landlords have taken from them (in the process of enlarging their estates), and for revolutionary tribunals to judge the landlords as oppressors.
• The document called for the expropriation of one third of landed estates and redistribution of the land and resources to the poor.
• If landlords opposed these changes, all of their property would be seized and nationalized for the benefit of the poor.
• Any military leaders that did not accept the Plan of Ayala would be considered traitors.
• Finally, the document suggested what would happen in the wake of a successful revolution (plans for elections of representatives and the president, for building of a democratic state, etc.). It also provided a conciliatory exit-strategy for Madero, who would not be threatened by violence if he voluntarily resigned from power.

Reference: Sub-subunit 6.4.2

5. What role did Victoriano Huerta play in the Mexican Revolution?

• Huerta had served as a military officer under Diaz, and though he pledged to be loyal to Madero after 1911, he began planning how to overthrow Madero and carried out a coup d’etat in 1913.
• He established a harsh military dictatorship, which was opposed by both liberals and rural activists.
• A coalition to overthrow Huerta was formed under Carranza’s leadership and, with assistance from the United States, it succeeded in forcing him out of office in July 1915.
• Huerta’s brief and bloody time in power was followed by the presidency of Venustiano Caranza, during which stability was restored and Mexico’s Constitution of 1917 was written.

Reference: Subunit 6.5